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# **The Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management Mobile Education Team Visits Tajikistan**

**By  
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During the week of July 12, the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) team of instructors conducted a five-day Security Assistance Management Planning course for military officers and civilian government employees in the Republic of Tajikistan. The visit was hosted by the Tajik Ministry of Defense, which provided classroom facilities at its Military Institute (the equivalent of the U.S. Military Academy) on the outskirts of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. The DISAM team was headed by Dr. Craig Brandt, Deputy Commandant, and included two other instructors, Mr. Ed Smith and Mr. Gary Taphorn. Because of the relatively new introduction of English language training in the Tajik military, the course was conducted in the Russian language, using simultaneous translation, and with the help of two very capable and professional local interpreters Ms. Venera Bagdalova and Ms. Marina Kadyrova. Previous work by the American embassy had translated the DISAM PowerPoint presentations into Russian, so the students were able to both read and listen in Russian. Mr. Parviz Kurbanov, the foreign service national administrative assistant in the security assistance office, provided superb support to the DISAM team throughout its visit.

The class was opened, and the DISAM team welcomed, by Major General Hakimjon Alovodinovich Hafizov, Director of the Military Institute, and Major Mark Handy, Chief of the Security Assistance Office in Dushanbe. The fifteen personnel who attended the course were from three branches of the Tajikistan government – the Ministry of Defense, the Committee for State Border Protection, and the National Guard. The official security assistance relationship at this time extends only to the Ministry of Defense. However, the Security Assistance Office at Dushanbe, headed by Major Handy, was able to include students from the other two organizations as part of a plan to broaden the security assistance relationship in the future.

The course focused on an overview of security assistance, including blocks of instruction on U.S. legislation and policy, process, logistics, finance, and training. In a U.S. embassy press release after the course, Major Handy stated the following:

The training will enhance the ability of selected Tajik ministries and organizations to fully utilize all aspects of security assistance. The end goal is to support military reform and modernization, democratization, interoperability, and systems upgrade.

The graduation ceremony on Friday, July 16, was attended by General Hafizov and his Deputy Director, Colonel Tohir Tiloev, as well as by the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Thomas Armbruster, and the U.S. Defense Attaché, Major Taft Blackburn.

Like other member countries of the former Soviet Union, Tajikistan is a fledgling democracy. After declaring its independence in 1991, the country promptly deteriorated into a bloody five-year civil war between the old-guard elites and a coalition of democratic reformers, Islamic activists, and other disenfranchised groups. The war resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of persons and the displacement of more than half a million. By 2000, a power-sharing peace accord was implemented and normalcy returned to the country. Tajikistan is now rebuilding itself with an integrated government.



**Chief of the Military Institute, opened the class which was held at the Tajikistan facility.**



**Translators (right) were indispensable for communicating with the students.**



**A representative from the Tajik National Guard, the Tajik Ministry of Defense, the Chief of the Tajik Military Institute, a representative from the American Embassy, and a U.S. Defense Attache, spoke at the graduation ceremony.**



**A Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management instructor presents a certificate of appreciation to the administrative assistant of the Tajikistan Office of Defense Cooperation, for his efforts in setting up the course.**



Tajikistan is a small country with a population of a little over six million people. While two-thirds of the people are ethnic Tajiks, a sizeable minority 23 percent are Uzbek, while Russians comprise about four percent of the population. Tajik was designated the sole official language in 1994, but Russian remains widely used in government and business. Unlike some of the other emerging Central Asian republics, Tajikistan was not blessed with oil, uranium or other valuable natural resources. It is heavily dependent on exports of cotton and aluminum and is now recovering from a severe drought which resulted in a shortfall of food production. Tajikistan has borders with four other countries, including China to the east and Afghanistan to the south. Although it has no common border with Russia, it continues to be the home base for a Russian motorized rifle division, which helps maintain stability and also is largely manned by Tajik soldiers. Tajikistan is a transit country for narcotics flowing north from Afghanistan into Russian and European markets.

Although the United States began a foreign assistance program to Tajikistan shortly after its independence in 1991, military assistance did not begin until 2002. Tajikistan is now concluding the third year of its International Military Education and Training program and has also begun receiving funding under the Department of Defense Counterterrorism Fellowship Program in 2004. The approximately one million dollars in fiscal year 2004 Foreign Military Finance allocated to Tajikistan has been programmed to address shortfalls in tactical communications. Other U.S. government funding under the Export Control and Related Border Security Program is helping the Tajik Committee for State Border Protection improve its border security.

Tajikistan has assisted the U.S. in Operation Enduring Freedom by allowing U.S. forces access to its airspace and airport facilities in Dushanbe. The Tajik military is in the process of developing a ten-year plan, to transform its ground forces from a largely motorized (mechanized) force to light infantry capable of securing its own borders and conducting operations in mountainous terrain. Although U.S. military assistance will remain limited, it should make a significant contribution in Tajikistan's commitment to modernize its military and increase the professionalism of its forces.

#### **About the Author**

Gary Taphorn is an assistant professor at DISAM. He is the regional seminar director for the Middle East and Central Asia, and the functional coordinator for security assistance office operations.